Rethinking governance

Practical steps for councils considering changes to their governance arrangements

Introduction

The availability of the committee system as a governance option for all councils in England has led a number of councils to consider changing their governance arrangements. Whichever system councils are thinking about moving from, or to, there are some common themes or issues that should be considered.

This guide sets out a "thinking toolkit" of the types of issues that councils, both members and officers, should think when considering governance change. It does not aim to set out the legal and procedural steps which you will need to undertake to do it (which are for the most part set out in legislation[1]), but it will provide you with the tools to think about the challenge.

It derives from previous Local Government Association (LGA) research on this matter, the experiences of councils who have changed their governance arrangements recently[2] and research carried out in 2012 by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on councils moving to the committee system[3].

This guide is not intended to nor does it constitute legal advice. Councillors and officers will need to obtain their own independent legal advice on any matters of a legal nature.

The importance of good governance

The difficult funding situation for local government means that councils are increasingly having to make decisions that will have profound, far-reaching implications both for the way that they and their partners deliver services, and on the lives of local people. These changes will involve a permanent shift in people's expectations of what local government does, and does not, do. They will also involve a shift in the way that councils work with others in their areas. Whether this is by an expansion in commissioning, pooling and aligning of budgets with partners, decommissioning of services, major transformation or all of these, local people need the confidence to know that decisions made in their name are high-quality, evidence based and considered openly and accountably.

This is why, now more than ever, good governance is vital. Councils have a responsibility to ensure that decision-making is as effective as it can be: decision making should critically benefit from the perspective of all councillors, but also be accountable, and involve the public.

Many councils are making informal changes to their governance arrangements including tightening up existing processes, making sure that avenues exist for all members to get involved in the policy development process (for example, through overview and scrutiny) and putting in place consultation arrangements for particularly contentious decisions. Some councils have decided to go a step further, and revisit their formal governance arrangements, looking at the different decision-making models available to them and taking steps to make a legal change to a different governance system.

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1   Chapter 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) sets out the legal arrangements in detail.

2   Detail from this research is provided in the appendices

3   Available online at: http://tinyurl.com/ck6b2qa

Changing governance under the Localism Act

The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) expanded the number of decision-making systems that councils could adopt[4]. Since that Act was passed there are three main models to choose from. Councils wishing to move from one to another must make a formal decision to do so, using a resolution of full council. In some instances a referendum will also be required:

- **Leader and cabinet.** This system was brought in by the Local Government Act 2000 and is the governance system that most councils operate. In some councils, individual members of the cabinet have decision-making powers; in others, decisions have to be made by the whole cabinet. Cabinet is led by a leader, who is elected by full council for a term determined by the council itself or on a four yearly basis[5] (and will usually be the leader of the largest party on the council). These councils must have at least one overview and scrutiny committee.

- **Mayoral system.** These councils have a directly-elected executive mayor with wide decision-making powers. The mayor appoints a cabinet made up of other councillors, who may also have decision-making powers. These councils must also have at least one overview and scrutiny committee.

- **Committee system.** Since the Localism Act this option is now available to all councils. Previously it was available only to district councils with populations under 85,000. Committee system councils make most decisions in committees, which are made up of a mix of councillors from all political parties. These councils may have one or more overview and scrutiny committees but are not required to.

There are variations for each of these models that can lead councils to adopt hybrid approaches; most commonly this is a hybrid between leader/cabinet and the committee system (with such an approach usually seen legally as being a modified version of the leader/cabinet system, and therefore not requiring a formal change under the Act). Councils also have the option of suggesting an approach of their own to the Secretary of State. No detailed criteria have been set out for how the Secretary of State will come to a decision about whether or not to approve any option suggested under this part of the Act.

A change in formal governance arrangements must occur at a specified "change time", which is at the council's Annual General Meeting (AGM). Prior to the change time, the council needs to have resolved formally to make a governance change. There is no minimum period of time between the resolution and the change time, but there does need to have been enough time for the council to formally publish the proposal and consult on it. For practical purposes this means that a resolution passed at council AGM itself, or at a special meeting a few days beforehand, is unlikely to be enough.

No one governance system is intrinsically better than another and no system is more or less expensive to operate; however some systems allow more members to be directly involved in voting on decisions. It is important to note that activity at committee level is not the same as member involvement in policymaking. Member involvement in policymaking is a longer-term, more involved process and can happen under any governance option.

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4   The Local Government Act 2000 made available four governance options for councils – leader/cabinet, executive mayor, mayor and council manager and a 'streamlined' committee system for shire districts with populations of less than 85,000. Subsequently, the mayor and council manager option was removed, leaving most councils in England with only two governance options.

5   As enacted in Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 (inserted by Sch.2 to the Localism Act 2011) and reg.2 of the Localism Act 2011 (Local Authority Governance Transitional Provisions) (England) Order 2012. This required a council to make provisions for setting the term of office for a leader as soon as reasonably practicable after the regulations came into force on 30 March 2012; until a Council adopted new arrangements, the old four year term (or balance of four year term) arrangements continued to apply.

How to go about it – the "thinking toolkit"

- Step 1   Plan your approach, and assess your current position
- Step 2   Consider some design principles
- Step 3   Think of ways to meet these objectives and put a plan in place
- Step 4   Make the change
- Step 5   Return to the issue after a year and review how things have gone

This process assumes that you only start looking at the design of new structures at step three. It is not about looking at the pros and cons of different structures, or considering structural options and developing a post hoc justification for them. Most important is obtaining a real understanding of the underlying political and cultural issues which, between them, may be driving the apparent need to change the way the council does business. However, we recognise that councils might be entering this process from a variety of situations, arising from political or strategic necessity. We hope that the questions at each stage will prove useful regardless of where you enter the process.

Step 1: plan your approach and assess your current position

Planning

CfPS has developed a framework called 'Accountability Works for You' which can be used to evaluate your current position[6].

The first thing to do will be to establish the purpose of the work: why do you want and need to change your governance arrangements? A variety of people in your council may have different views of what this purpose is; this is why it is important to set down what those (potentially differing) views are at the outset. This will give you a baseline on which to build, and judge, the rest of your work. As you need to operate within the framework of the Act you should seek advice from your monitoring officer, who has a statutory responsibility for making sure council's comply with the law.

The next step is to establish a scope for the work – where you want it to lead and how you will get there – which will be based on the work's purpose. This is a scope for the review of governance itself, not for the change in governance.

The scope might consider the following issues:

- How will the authority ensure that this work – from the consideration of options, to the implementation and review of new arrangements – will be led by elected members?

- How will we make sure that this review of governance gets the views of all interested parties?

- How wide should we look? Is this a review just of internal council decision-making, or are there knock-on impacts on partners, who may need to be involved?

- How can we ensure that the broad democratic expectations of local residents are built in to this study?

- Who will lead the review?

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6   Available online at: www.cfps.org.uk/AW4U

The tools of appreciative inquiry[7] can provide a good way to approach this issue. Having this general discussion at the outset will set some broad parameters for the work, and it will also help to manage expectations of what can, and cannot, be achieved through governance change.

Assessment

Assessing how you currently make decisions is not just about drawing a map of your systems or processes, or looking at individual bits of your governance arrangements separately. It is about taking an approach to the way you make decisions which recognises that the systems you adopt for member decision-making have an impact on everything you do. It is also about considering how you engage a wide range of stakeholders in that decision-making process.

If you are considering a significant change such as a formal shift in your governance arrangements, which could lock you in to a new decision-making structure for five years[8], you need to have carried out this fundamental exercise beforehand. It is potentially intensive, but will have benefits that reflect that good governance is not just about democratic services or even the internal workings of the council; it is also about the relationship between your authority, its elected members, partners and the public.

Some of the things that you might want to consider will include:

- How do we involve all members – not just in the way that decisions are made, but in the way that policy is developed?

- How is the public voice integrated in the way decisions are made – at neighbourhood and authority-wide level?

- What decisions are currently delegated to officers, and what decisions (under leader/cabinet and mayor/cabinet) are currently delegated to individual cabinet members?

- How are members involved in the evaluation and review of decisions once they are made (in particular, in-year performance management and budget monitoring)?

- How can we improve our forward planning arrangements to open out decision-making, and policy development? Are there ways in which we can make things like background papers more easily accessible?

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7   You can find more in the CfPS publication Appreciative scrutiny (2012) available at: http://tinyurl.com/pzdfeuy

8   Unless a second resolution following a referendum has been approved.

Step 2: consider some design principles

If you have undertaken an initial assessment you will have identified some strengths (practice and ways of working that you want to keep) and some weaknesses (ways of working that you want to stop or change substantially).

These strengths and weaknesses might reflect the attitudes and behaviours of council decision-makers (both members and officers), partners, the public and others, as well as reflecting structural issues. Some examples include:

- **Strengths and weaknesses in the member/officer relationship.** This might look like, for example, a commitment to involve all members in the policy development and decision-making process, through scrutiny, area committees, partnership boards and cabinet decision-making as appropriate, or conversely an officer-led process where only cabinet members are seen to have any stake in decision-making and non-executives are relegated to the position of passive spectators.

- **Strengths and weaknesses in the way that forward planning/work programming occurs.** This might look like, for example, clarity and consistency in the way that officers approach policy development and decision-making, with plans being kept to and important, strategic decisions identified, or conversely a muddled plan composed of a mixture of operational and strategic decisions which reveals little about the priorities of decision-makers, or the way in which they formulate decisions.

- **Strengths and weaknesses in the way that information about decisions (including background papers) are published and used.** This might look like, for example, proactive efforts to publish background papers as they are produced, and attempts made to respond positively when the assumptions in those background papers are challenged by others, or conversely an opaque system whereby attempts are not made to justify decisions and engagement is tightly controlled through consultation processes that are wholly divorced from the formal decision-making cycle.

- **Strengths and weaknesses in the way that the council involves the public in major decisions.** This might look like, for example, a commitment on major policy changes to engage those most affected by those changes[9], or conversely a more defensive attitude that sees members or senior officers exerting control over the agenda for fear that the public will derail necessary decisions.

These strengths and weaknesses, and others like them, are not strengths and weaknesses in the various governance options per se. They are strengths and weaknesses in the way that your existing governance arrangements work in your council.

You can use this to develop some design principles. These should not be vague, general aspirations such as making the council operate more democratically or enhancing transparency. They should be tangible aims that you can return to in future to help you to come to a judgment on whether your new systems are working or not. For example, you could state that any new governance system should:

- involve all councillors in the development of key policies

- identify key evidence sources for major decisions and demonstrate how they are being used to inform the substance of that decision

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9   This is likely to become of increased importance, especially as a "duty to consult" may be introduced as part of the Deregulation Bill.

- focus member involvement on strategic decision-making; design officer delegations to focus on operational decisions – design the budget and policy framework to reflect this fundamental principle

- provide a key role for councillors in performance management and in-year financial monitoring that takes account of their unique perspective as elected politicians.

These are just examples to demonstrate the clarity you need in your objectives; there may well be others that are particularly important for your council.

Step 3: think of ways to establish a system that meets the requirements of these principles and put a plan in place

How will you get there? What changes to the way you work might be necessary in terms of both culture and structure?

Some issues to think about that relate to culture and attitudes include:

- How to establish clearer, more consistent and less arbitrary rules to define what does and does not go on the forward plan as a key decision.

- How to ensure that the procedure for dealing with key decisions contains provision for involving all members and members of the public.

- Whether such provision can be made under your existing arrangements (assuming that you operate the leader/cabinet model). This would involve consideration of whether moving to a new governance option (for example, the committee system) would provide members with the assurance that they will be involved in making decisions on strategic issues.

- How to tighten up (in terms of methodology) and open out (in terms of transparency) performance management systems – including the potential for more member involvement. Greater transparency for the public is a useful by-product of such an approach.

Different design principles, and different approaches to meeting the requirements of those principles, will require different structural solutions, for example:

- minor changes to the constitution to strengthen the existing forward plan

- more major changes to schemes of delegations, financial procedures, performance management systems and/or systems used to engage with the public, within your existing governance option

- formal changes to member decision-making structures that stop short of a formal governance change – for example, the adoption of a hybrid system

- an all-out change from one governance option to another under the Local Government Act 2000.

You may find that your objectives and design principles can be met without a formal change in governance. You may, for example, be able to meet them by bolstering the role that councillors play through the overview and scrutiny process. As part of this process, you may find it useful to consider the risks in taking either formal or informal action to change governance arrangements, and to establish how you will seek to mitigate those risks.

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Consider the different structural options available

In the CfPS publication 'Musical chairs' we suggested that there was a spectrum of different governance options available to councils.

If your exercise leads you to consider that structural change may be appropriate, you will need to decide which of these options will make it easiest for you to achieve your design principles. This is not an exhaustive list of options, nor is intended to set out the pros and cons of any one approach. The pros and cons will vary for every council based on the political and organisational context, and councils must take their own independent legal advice on the implications of any proposed option.

- **A leader-cabinet system with individual cabinet member decision-making** (as seen in most English authorities) is the standard approach which the majority of councils currently operate.

- **A mayor, with various different approaches to cabinet autonomy** (as seen in Hackney, Bristol, and Hartlepool before 2013); different mayors take different approaches to the appointment of their cabinets, and the amount of powers those cabinets have.

- **A traditional committee system** (as seen in Nottinghamshire) which will have a relatively large number of service committees which will often align fairly closely with council departments. There may or may not be a coordinating policy and resources committee to knit together work programmes. This approach will usually require frequent meetings to deal with cross-cutting issues and, hence, careful planning by officers.

- **A streamlined committee system** (as seen in Brighton and Hove) will consist of two or three service committees, which may be supplemented by one or more overview and scrutiny committees. This was the common approach taken in what were formerly known as fourth option councils, those shire district councils who opted to retain the committee system between 2000 and 2012.

- **A hybrid system** (as seen in Kent) whereby a cabinet ratifies decisions made by a number of cabinet committees. This requires a political assurance by the leadership that such ratification will happen.

- **A leader-cabinet system with collective cabinet decision-making** (as seen in Sutton before 2012) has collective decision-making at cabinet, with a leader who chooses to act accordingly. Under this model the cabinet does not delegate power to individual cabinet members to make decisions, although delegated decision-making by senior officers will still happen in consultation with lead members.

Weighing up a formal change

This part of the exercise will be the point at which members actually decide whether formal governance change is necessary. Having a clear rationale for this is critical. It is therefore not a decision you should attempt to make at the beginning of the process. However, a situation might occur where this decision has been taken at an earlier point in the process and you will need to think about how the ideas outlined in earlier steps can be brought into the implementation of a new system.

Your rationale should identify how and why a change will help you to strengthen governance in a way that would not be possible through other means. For example:

- It may be a means of embedding a new culture of decision-making, where the protection afforded by the law and the constitution are seen as a backstop.

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- It may be seen as a necessary component in a wider approach to improving the way decisions are made; for example, more effective partnership decision making or the devolution of decision-making responsibilities to a ward or divisional level.

- It may provide a means of signaling within the authority, and to those outside it, of a break with past practice and a commitment to do things better; however it will not achieve these improvements on its own.

The fundamental judgement – why make this change? – is something that will be different for every authority. The political and organisational context within which your council sits will affect the changes you make. For example some changes that, in another council, might be seen as requiring formally moving from one governance option to another to be fully embedded, in your instance may not be seen as demanding such a change.

It is important to be self-critical at this point in the process. This is the final stage before you start to undertake work to implement the change itself and an opportunity to challenge assumptions and to set out the fundamental reasoning behind your decision.

Step 4: making the change

The following are the various different council processes and systems that may need to be looked at when you are amending your decision-making arrangements, and any relevant legal issues should also be considered. You will need to think about the way you design these changes, and the way that members make decisions on their implementation (which will usually be at full council):

- financial procedures, including the operation of audit

- access to, and publication of, performance scorecards and quarterly financial monitoring information

- the forward plan and corporate work programme

- changes to committee structures (which can happen at a time other than at Council AGM)

- formal changes in governance, which incorporates all of the above changes.

It is important that the way in which these changes are made itself reflects the design principles which you have established for your new governance system. You might also want to consider a risk plan so that you can be aware of issues or situations that could negatively affect your proposed arrangements.

The formal move from one governance option to another will take effect following the council's AGM, with a resolution of full council having to have been made beforehand. This earlier resolution needs to be made in good time, to allow for the council to undertake any necessary consultation with notice requirements set out in the Act.

Step 5: return to the issue and review how things have gone

It is important to evaluate how things have gone after a year or so, in order to see whether the resources you have expended in making the change in governance have made the difference you hoped.

This need not be a complicated bureaucratic exercise – just a short assessment of the position, informed by insight from councillors and any other interested parties. Doing this at the time of council AGM gives you the opportunity to make any necessary tweaks to the constitution.

If the changes have not resulted in the outcome you were trying to achieve, there are ways and means of addressing that. The detailed work carried out the previous year to plan and deliver the new governance arrangements will help with this. It may have been that your plan was too ambitious, or there may have been factors – internal or external – that were not taken into account, or that were difficult to predict (political issues, for example). If you developed a risk plan it will be much easier to identify and act on any failings.

You can review the likely reasons for the failure and take action to address them.

Managing this exercise in a political environment

It is important to recognise that the amendment or change of governance arrangements – whether or not it involves formally moving from one governance option to another – is likely to be politically contentious. In such situations the rationale must be carefully thought through as it may lock your council in to a new governance system for five years[10].

Instances exist where party political reasons have influenced a council's decision to change systems. These have included:

- the leader of a large majority group viewing another governance option (for example the committee system) as a way to better control his/her own political group on the council

- the leader of a minority administration viewing the committee system as a way of garnering support from other parties represented on the council

- the council's leadership being lobbied by councillors who believe that changing governance arrangements would improve the council's decision-making culture.

Although such instances have occurred, introducing a structural solution will not resolve issues which may have underlying political causes.

However if a decision to change governance arrangements is made under such circumstances, it is important to ensure that there is buy in from all parties and independent councillors, alongside a commitment to investigate governance options based on evidence. Actions that can be taken under such circumstances to support the process include:

- Formal, independent, cross-party discussions led by someone who will be perceived as having a non-party political approach. This may be someone entirely outside the authority or a highly-regarded local councillor.

- A transparent and evidence-based approach to establishing what the aims and objectives of governance change should be.

This is a more formal approach than that which we have outlined elsewhere in this document. However, in a challenging political environment, such formality can help to defuse disagreements, and can provide a framework in which it will be safer for councillors to challenge their own assumptions about governance change, and the assumptions of their peers.

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10   Unless a second resolution following a referendum has been approved.

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Case studies

Cornwall (unitary authority, South West)

Cornwall undertook an independent review of governance arrangements over the course of 2011 and 2012. This was a comprehensive exercise, chaired by an independent person, which took evidence from a wide range of sources. It should be seen in the context of Cornwall's creation as a unitary authority in 2009, which gave rise to a need to consider how governance would operate across a very large geographical area.

A member panel was established to lead the review, assisted by an external panel of experts from outside the council. The panels took evidence from a wide range of stakeholders from within the county, and from experts nationally, which they used to formulate a set of recommendations.

Transparency of decision-making was seen as a high priority, as was the need to ensure that decision-making was connected to people at local level through structures such as Community Network Panels and parish councils. The role of non-executive members was considered – in the context of their scrutiny role and engagement with the policy development process, as well as their training and development.

The member panel recommended no formal changes to the council's existing governance arrangements (that is, that the council remain under the leader-cabinet model) but did recommend changes to that model. In particularly, changes were recommended around the role of those members in formal "cabinet support" positions, the engagement with the council with community structures and the strengthening of overview and scrutiny. The Panel felt that improvements to decision-making and governance were not necessarily predicated on a formal change to governance models.

Cambridgeshire (county council, East of England)

Following the May 2013 elections, a resolution was put to the council's AGM to adopt the committee system of governance, on the basis that the committee system was "the most democratic and representative form of governance". Originally it was planned that this would take effect from 2013 but advice was given that this would not be permitted under the Localism Act. As such the decision was made to change in 2014.

Proposals have been developed over the course of 2013, with detailed plans having been submitted to members for examination in October 2013. Members agreed to the creation of a small number of service committees, with a General Purposes committee to act as a "clearing house" to coordinate the role of those service committees.

Changes will also be made to officer delegation arrangements, whereby some decisions will be made in consultation with members, as well as the more traditional classes of decisions

reserved for members, and those delegated entirely to officers. There is also provision for the retention of a form of call-in, with the possibility – under strictly limited circumstances – of issues to be passed up for decision at full council.

Stroud (district council, South West)

Following debate, the council resolved to move to the committee system in November 2012, following an executive-led commitment to pursue it in May 2012. A cross-party member working group was established to consider how such a change would happen, which resulted in formal proposals being put to council in April 2013.

Some design principles were established, submitted to council in November 2012 as part of a report on the relative features of the different systems, and used to develop the final arrangements, submitted to council in April 2013.

Delegations to committees and delegations to officers were looked at very carefully as part of these arrangements although ultimately no significant amendments to delegations were made.

The result has been a streamlined committee structure without a separate overview and scrutiny function.

Nottinghamshire (county council, East Midlands)

An undertaking was given in the 2009 election manifesto of the Conservative group that they would take steps to adopt the committee system when the legislation allowed. They started taking formal steps to change before the Localism Act was enacted, and formally changed in May 2012.

Nottinghamshire's approach was based on the presumption that a committee system would be a more open, democratic and transparent approach to member decision-making. The council has taken its pre-2000 committee structure as a model for its current approach. Officer delegations have not, however, been subject to any alterations. The council resolved that it would only undertake any change on the basis of that change being cost-neutral; there is no additional cost to the operation of their committee system over and above that of the leader-cabinet system.

Originally, Nottinghamshire planned not to have a separate overview and scrutiny committee, but since May 2012 the decision has been made to establish one, principally to carry out the authority's health overview and scrutiny functions (which cannot be carried out by its health committee, which acts as the county Health and Wellbeing Board).

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Kent (county council, South East)

Kent operates what have been termed hybrid arrangements. While the council still operates legally under the leader-cabinet model, cabinet decision making is supplemented through cabinet committees, which are the de facto decision-making bodies. Committees receive officer reports and make recommendations, which are submitted to the executive for ratification. This system's success rests on the assurance by the executive that they will ratify recommendations made to them by committees; as long as that assurance exists, this ratification is purely a procedural matter and the decision is made in the committee itself.

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Where to go for further help

The CfPS published a guide in 2012 for councils considering the adoption of the committee system. This guide, called 'Musical Chairs', is available on the CfPS website: tinyurl.com/ptydhno

The LGA has carried out wider work on governance, democracy and the role of elected councillor. This can be found on their website: tinyurl.com/o9b72b4

INLOGOV, the Institute of Local Government at the University of Birmingham, have carried out research on local authority governance models and have held a number of seminars for councils considering governance change.

A number of councils have considered changes in their governance in the last few years. The LGA and CfPS are currently engaged in building up networking arrangements between these authorities. A full list of authorities who have made changes to their governance arrangements, or are planning to in the next year, can be found in the appendix to this report.

For more direct advice, please contact:

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Appendix

These tables provide further information on councils who have:

• councils who moved to a committee system in May 2013

• councils who moved to a committee system in May 2012

• recently made other changes to their governance arrangements

• are considering a governance change in the near future

• have considered a governance change but have decided against it.

Where councils were not participants in the original research undertaken by CfPS, information is not included for May 2012.

Table 1: Councils who moved to a committee system in May 2013

Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Hartlepool	Unitary	North East	Expected to hold a referendum in November to move to a committee system in May 2013.	Committee system adopted in May 2013, involving creation of five service committees. The statutory scrutiny functions around crime and disorder, and health, will sit within the remit of the Audit and Governance committee, which is chaired by a non-majority group councillor. Resolved to continue to publish a forward plan of key decisions.
Newark	District	East Midlands	Envisaged moving to a committee system in 2013, but it would have to be something that meshed with its aim of being a commissioning council. A separate overview and scrutiny function was not envisaged.	Moved to a committee system in May 2013.

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Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Reading	Unitary	South East		Moved to the committee system in May 2013; changed arrangements only to apply to the authority's executive decision making structure – creation of four new Standing Committees. No overview and scrutiny committee, with functions exercised by each committee with regard to its services. Policy committee to cover scrutiny across council services covered by more than one committee.
Stroud	District	South West		Moved to the committee system in May 2013 following a resolution in November 2012. The new constitutional arrangements were developed through a cross-party member working group. There is no separate scrutiny function. The community safety scrutiny functions of the authority are transacted by the Community Services committee.

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Table 2: Council who moved to a committee system in May 2012

Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Brighton	Unitary	South East	Adopted committee arrangements in 2012, with significant cross-party support. Planned to review and revise after one year.	Arrangements have now been reviewed with some minor changes (mainly in the remit of committees) being brought in from May 2013. Some partnership decision-making arrangements (principally around relationships with Clinical Commissioning Groups) have been tweaked – mainly to integrate, where possible, such partnership structures within the committee system. It has been proposed to appoint certain members to take lead responsibility for certain policy areas, to augment the role played by committee chairs.
Kingston upon Thames	London borough	London	This council adopted a hybrid-style arrangement for a transitional period in 2011 with a view to adopting the committee system in 2013. Under the transitional arrangements committees made decisions which are then ratified by the executive. There is no individual cabinet member decision-making.	The council decided by a resolution on 17 April 2012 to adopt the committee system in May 2012. No significant amendments made to constitution or working practices in May 2013.

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Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Nottinghamshire	County	East Midlands	Put in place a committee system closely reflecting pre-2000 structure, with no separate scrutiny committee.	A separate Health Scrutiny committee was established almost immediately following the establishment of the new structure in May 2012.
South Gloucestershire[11]	Unitary	South West	Made the decision to move to a committee system in March 2013.	No significant amendments made to constitution or working practices in May 2013.
Sutton	London borough	London	Committee system adopted in May 2012, based on very clear objectives in development since 2010. The new system included one scrutiny committee, and featured significant changes to financial regs and schemes of delegation. Plans were to review arrangements after six months.	No significant amendments made to constitution or working practices in May 2013.

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11. In Musical chairs we erroneously stated that South Gloucestershire, which was originally anonymised as Council N, was a shire district; it is in fact a unitary.

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Table 3: Councils which adopted hybrid arrangements in 2012 or 2013

Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Cheshire East	Unitary	North West	A member working group was convened to establish whether governance change should be pursued.	In December 2013, moved to a hybrid-style system in which policy development groups, mapped to cabinet portfolios, support executive decisions making, supported by an overview and scrutiny function which focuses on corporate and external issues.
Cornwall	Unitary	South West	A council in an area involved in local government reorganistion in 2009 that established a member level group to consider proposals in more detail. The council has a large number of members, many of which wished to see councillors taking a more active part in decision-making.	Established an independent governance commission which looked at the proposals in more detail. This has resulted in proposals to adopt an approach which looks more like a hybrid system.
Kent	County	South East	Moved to a hybrid system in May 2012. This saw a number of cabinet committees being established. Decisions go to cabinet committees, where recommendations are made to cabinet. Cabinet then ratifies the recommendations.	Some minor changes in May 2013 but no substantive alterations.

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Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Sevenoaks	District	South East		In May 2013 a hybrid governance system was adopted.
Tunbridge Wells	District	South East		There is no ambition to move to a committee system, but a hybrid system has recently been adopted. There is a cabinet with three advisory committees beneath it. The system is designed to promote more consensus, as opposed to a culture of adversarialism which had previously existed. Overview and scrutiny has been retained.
Wandsworth	London borough	London	Has operated a hybrid-style committee structure since 2000, with committees passing decisions to cabinet for ratification.	No proposals to change these arrangements for the time being.
Wirral	Metropolitan district	North West		Considering adoption of the committee system or, more likely, a hybrid model; a governance working party has been established to set out the options and agree a way forward.

Table 4: Councils who considered changing governance arrangements to move to a committee system but decided not to

Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Basildon	District	East of England		A task and finish group was set up to consider the potential for changes in governance arrangements, but ultimately recommended the retention of the leader and cabinet system.
Bristol	Unitary	South West	One of the twelve core cities, in which a referendum for a mayor was held. Some were considering that a "no" vote in the referendum could result in more concrete moves to adopt a committee system.	Referendum resulted in a "yes" vote, so potential moves to a committee system were not investigated further.

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Table 5: Councils which may adopt different arrangements in 2014 or thereafter

Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Barnet	London borough	London		A resolution was passed by full council in January 2013, setting out a potential approach to move to a committee system in 2014.
Cambridgeshire	County	East of England		Movement by some members to adopt the committee system at council AGM in May 2013, but as no resolution had been made beforehand, conclusion reached that this would not be in accordance with the Act. At council AGM the decision was made to adopt the committee system from May 2014.
Kensington and Chelsea	London borough	London	There had been significant enthusiasm for a change, although it was felt likely that such change would be to a hybrid model rather than a formal shift to the committee system. Despite enthusiasm, in 2012 no formal instructions had been given to officers.	Although no formal commitment has been made it is likely that this council will move to the committee system in 2014. There is currently no indication about whether this is likely to affect joint working arrangements with London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster.

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Council	Type of council	Region	In May 2012	In May 2013
Norfolk	County	East of England		Following the May 2013 elections, the council resolved to take steps to adopt the committee system in May 2014.
Northumberland	Unitary	North East		Members have asked for further information about the different governance options available; there is an interest in considering alternatives but no formal plans at present.
Nottingham	District	East Midlands		Members have expressed an interest in understanding the options and officers have provided papers explaining changes. As yet, no formal decision has been made.
Wokingham	District	South East		A member working group was established in 2012 with a view to recommending a change to council in 2013. However, the decision has been taken that due to the potential complexity, and different options available, the working group will continue to meet with a view to adopting new arrangements in 2014.

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